

Characters

- OSCAR (45 years old.)
- BERTHA (His sister. 43 years old.)
- EVE (A servant. 40 years old.)
- PIKE (A man. 40 years old.)

SET:

Upstage, extending across the stage, is a corridor that leads on the right to the main door and on the left to the kitchen and other rooms. On the downstage of the corridor there is a wall. On the center of this wall there is the entrance way to a hallway that runs perpendicular to the corridor. On each side of the hallway there are walls. On the upstage side of each wall there is a door. These doors lead: on the right, to Bertha's room; on the left, to Oscar's room. The downstage walls of these rooms are about eighteen inches high. The downstage area is to the right, the dining room; to the left, the living room. In Bertha's bedroom there is a single bed against the right and down walls and a night table against the right wall. There is a small picture of a landscape in the back wall. Oscar's bedroom mirrors Bertha's bedroom. In the dining room there is a sideboard against the right wall and a table and three chairs to the left of the sideboard. In the living room there are two stuffed chairs and a side table. On the side table in Bertha's room there is paper and pencil. On Oscar's side table there is a paper and pencil, a comic book, and a newspaper. In the drawer of the side table there is a plate of food. On the sideboard there is a cup of water. On the dining table there is a newspaper. In the table drawer there is a newspaper. On the left stuffed chair there is a newspaper. On the right stuffed chair there are two newspapers.

The costumes are considerably outdated.

Act

Scene 1

Eve sits on the left stuffed chair. She wears a hat. She carries a purse and holds a newspaper in her hand. Oscar sits in a wheelchair very close to Eve. He wears a dark grey suit. Oscar is being charming.

OSCAR

What is your name?

EVE

...Eve.

OSCAR

And where do you come from?

EVE

From Franklyn.

OSCAR

Our Franklyn?

(*Eve nods.*)

Hm. You're one of our little maidens then?--And what do the girls in Franklyn look like?

(*Eve looks at Oscar in disbelief. He goes closer to her and speaks in her ear.*)

What do the girls in Franklyn look like?

(Pinching her breast.)

Do the girls in Franklyn have a pretty little tit. Like a bird. That goes pip pip.

(Pinching her other breast.)

Do they have another little bird who wants to go pip pip.

(Pinching at each breast with each word.)

Pip pip pip pip.

(He laughs with delight and spins on his wheelchair.)

What do the girls in Franklyn talk about? Do they go,

(Using both hands to move her lips and imitating a young child.)

"The little girl is in the garden drinking tea with her daddy and her mommy?

(Wheeling himself around.)

The little girl is in the garden. Mommy's in the garden. Daddy's in the garden."

(He wheels himself to her with a fiendish look. She goes left. He goes after her. She runs right. She stands against a wall. He goes after her. He puts his head under her skirt.)

Pow!

(He moves his head up and down making slurping sounds. She gets away. He makes a move towards her. She takes a step back. He makes another move. She takes another step back.)

EVE

Stop.

(Oscar looks at her arms.)

OSCAR

Hairy.

EVE

What.

OSCAR

Hairy legs. And your arms? Are they hairy?

(She hides her arms behind her.)

Let's see.

EVE

Don't.

(He wheels himself to her; breathing heavily. She hits him with the newspaper repeatedly. His head drops down gradually while making orgasmic sounds. Bertha enters from the corridor. She wears a dark blue suit. She and Oscar speak almost simultaneously.)

BERTHA

What did you do to her?

OSCAR

I did what I wanted to. What I wanted to. That's what I did.

BERTHA

And did you ask her what she wanted?

(Getting closer to Eve.)

What do you want, honey?

(To Oscar.)

And you treat her like that?

(Reaching for Eve's newspaper.)

Give me that!

(Bertha hits Oscar with the newspaper. He takes the newspaper from the table and hits her back. They hit each other for a while. He stops hitting her.)

OSCAR

Were you looking through the keyhole?

BERTHA

No. I wasn't!

OSCAR

Did you see me do it?

BERTHA

No.

OSCAR

Were you listening?--With your ear against the door.

BERTHA

No.

OSCAR

You were. I know you were. You heard it all. Did you see me go under her skirt? Did you see me bite her thigh?

(He reenacts his going under her skirt.)

Did you see me like this...? Like this...? And like this...?

BERTHA

No, I didn't

OSCAR

You saw it all.

BERTHA

No, I didn't.

OSCAR

Liar, won't admit it.

BERTHA

No. I won't.

OSCAR

(*To Eve.*)

Can't stand her.

(*Bertha spits. Oscar spits. He speaks to Eve.*)

My sister!

BERTHA

Did you come in answer to the ad?

EVE

Yes.

BERTHA

Come here, honey.

OSCAR

Don't touch her! We did it! She and I! So get out!

BERTHA

You did nothing! That's what you did! Nothing!

OSCAR

What do you mean...

BERTHA

You did nothing.

OSCAR

...Oh... What I did... What I did ... Oh... If you knew ...

BERTHA

You did nothing. I saw you through the keyhole.

OSCAR

Peeping tom!

BERTHA

(*Going to Eve.*)

Come here, honey.

OSCAR

(*Hitting Bertha with the newspaper.*)

Peeping tom!

(*Bertha hits him with the newspaper. Eve hits them both. They hit her. Oscar falls off the chair. He speaks from the floor.*)

OSCAR

And you! Do you get pussy! Do you get cock! Do you get anything! Go tell them I do! Me in a wheelchair! Never out on the street! And yet me! I get pussy!

(*Eve helps Oscar on the chair.*)

Pussy! And what do you get! You get nothing! I get pussy! And you get nothing! Like it or not!

BERTHA

You're ridiculous!

OSCAR

I'm mean and I'm nasty. Mean and evil. I'm a cad! A cad! So! Now you know!

BERTHA

Know what!

OSCAR

What I do.

BERTHA

Nothing!

OSCAR

You can tell everyone what I am.

BERTHA

You're disgusting!

OSCAR

A cad.

BERTHA

Disgusting.

OSCAR

A cad.

BERTHA

Disgusting.

OSCAR

Shut up! She liked it!

EVE

I didn't like it.

BERTHA

Disgusting!

OSCAR

A cad.

BERTHA

Disgusting.

OSCAR

I liked it. She liked it! Why disgusting!

BERTHA

Disgusting!

OSCAR

(*Mocking refinement.*)

You want tea! Honey!

BERTHA

Did you wash your hands?

OSCAR

It's my nose I should wash!

(*He makes slurping sounds.*)

Not my hands! My nose! Smell my nose! She loved it!

BERTHA

(*Walking seductively towards Eve.*)

How come she says nothing.

(*Putting her arm around Eve's waist. She speaks to Oscar while looking at Eve.*)

You keep saying she loved it but she says nothing.

(To Eve.)

Why don't you say something, honey?

(To Oscar.)

You're a pig.

(Bertha looks at Eve intensely during Oscar's speech.)

OSCAR

You're a pig! Busybody! Looking behind doors! I'm sexy and you're not! I'm sexy! I'm so sexy! So sexy! She loved it! She loved it! She loved it! Didn't she! She loved it! You saw it! You saw her! She loved it! And don't tell me she didn't. Go tell the world! Tell the world! Tell the world that you saw it!

BERTHA

(Still looking at Eve.)

I'll tell them that you're lousy.

OSCAR

I'm mean!

BERTHA

You're lousy!

OSCAR

Jealous of me!

(Bertha brings Eve close to herself.)

BERTHA

Had it been me...

EVE

Oh! God!

BERTHA

Why do you say that. You can work for me, honey. A girl like that from a small town. Alone in the city. All you want is to get your lapping and have her tell the whole world. I hope she tells no one!

(Bertha brings Eve closer to herself.)

BERTHA

So you're looking for work!

EVE

That's right.

BERTHA

(Holding her closer.)

Well...

(Eve pushes her off. Bertha loses her balance and steps backwards until she hits a piece of furniture and falls to the floor.)

I knew it!

EVE

What.

BERTHA

(From the floor.)

Rotten luck. Always had rotten luck. He's got all the luck! Rotten luck! You let him do it! Him yes! Him yes! But me no! To me it's no!

OSCAR

That's right!

BERTHA

Can you cook?

EVE

Not too good.

BERTHA

Good. Cook for him. Lousy food. Poison him.

(Oscar spits. Bertha spits. There is a shift of light. Eve exits left. Oscar pivots on the wheelchair. Bertha grabs him by the collar.)

BERTHA

Where did she go?

OSCAR

(Choking.)

She left.

BERTHA

She didn't leave. Where is she?

OSCAR

(Choking.)

In the kitchen.

(Bertha exits left. Bertha and Eve are heard arguing offstage. There is the sound of pots and pans falling. Oscar laughs fiendishly. Bertha enters tumbling backwards. Her hair is disheveled. She flies around the room bumping on furniture and falls to the floor at Oscar's feet.)

OSCAR

What happened?

BERTHA

Oh, buzz off!

OSCAR

Did she slap you in the face! Did she push you against the wall! Did she throw hot water at your face? Did she say I hate you? I'm sure she did all that.

(*There is a shift of light. Eve enters. She looks slightly paler and begins to show dark circles around her eyes. Through the rest of the play Eve gradually looks more sickly and haggard. She wears an apron. She carries a serving dish and a cloth. She goes to the dining-room. Oscar wheels himself to left of the table. Bertha sits to the right. Eve wipes the table and places the dish in the center.*)

BERTHA

Sit down. Sit with us. You can eat at the table. You pay for the food, don't you? So you can sit with us.

OSCAR

She pays?

BERTHA

It's a loan.

(*To Eve.*)

You shouldn't eat standing up.

(*Eve sits. She looks at Bertha, then at Oscar, then down. Oscar and Bertha look at each other and smile. There is a shift of light. Eve takes the serving dish to the sideboard. Oscar exits. As Bertha goes to the up side of the sideboard, she gets as close to Eve as possible. Eve takes the cup from the sideboard. She lifts the up-right corner of the tablecloth, pours water on the table, and wipes the table. Bertha watches Eve's buttocks move. Bertha walks to Eve. Her pelvis touches her. Eve thrusts her buttocks against Bertha. Bertha goes flying around the room bumping on furniture. She falls on the floor. She speaks fiercely.*)

BERTHA

You're wasting water!

(*She moves on the floor towards Eve.*)

You're wasting water! You're wasting water! You liked it.

(*She moves closer.*)

... You liked it.

(*She moves closer. Pleadingly.*)

... You liked it?

(*Oscar enters. Eve puts the tablecloth over the table and puts the cup on the sideboard.*)

OSCAR

(*Chasing Eve around the table and up the hallway.*)

A cad! A cad!

(*There is a shift of light. Eve exits left. Oscar follows her. Eve crosses the corridor from left to right as Bertha sits at the dawn side of the table. Eve re-enters. She walks to the living room.*)

BERTHA

You came back, Eve. For me?

(*Eve looks under the cushion of the left stuffed chair.*)

BERTHA

(*Starting to go to Eve.*)

I thought maybe you came for me.

(*Eve goes to look under the table.*)

BERTHA

Don't tell him.

EVE

What!

BERTHA

Tell him you came for me.

(*Oscar enters.*)

She came for me, Oscar. She came for me!

(*Oscar chases Eve around the table and into his bedroom. Eve trips and falls on the bed. Oscar jumps on the bed as Eve rolls off the bed. Oscar bounces up and down. Eve stands and watches him in disbelief.*)

OSCAR

For me! For me! For me! For me! She came for meeeee!!!

(*Eve exits right. Oscar jumps out of bed. He goes to the hallway. He speaks to Bertha.*)

I did it.

(*He exits left. Eve crosses left on the corridor.*)

BERTHA

You're back.

EVE

(*Without stopping.*)

I forgot something.

(*Eve screams offstage. She crosses right on the corridor.*)

BERTHA

I was remembering when we were sexual.

EVE

(*Re-entering.*)

When was that?

BERTHA

Just remembering.

EVE

(*Exiting right.*)

We never were.

BERTHA

We were.

EVE

(*Offstage.*)

Never were.

BERTHA

We were!

EVE

(*Offstage.*)

Never were!

BERTHA

Ah--buzz off!

EVE

(*Offstage.*)

Ah--buzz off!--You buzz off!

(*Pike and Eve are heard speaking offstage. Bertha listens.*)

BERTHA

Who's that!

(*They continue speaking offstage.*)

Who's that! Who's that! Who's that!!!

(*There is a shift of light. Bertha goes to the living room. She sits on the left stuffed chair and reads a newspaper. Oscar enters.*)

OSCAR

(Going to her; petulant.)

What are you looking at--what are you reading?

BERTHA

Nothing!

OSCAR

Let me see!

(Bertha puts the newspaper behind her. She whispers.)

BERTHA

There's something I have to tell you.

OSCAR

What.

BERTHA

Something I heard.

OSCAR

What.

BERTHA

Eve.

OSCAR

What about Eve?

BERTHA

Talking to a man.

OSCAR

What man?

(Eve's and Pike's mumbling is heard throughout the following speech. Bertha listens for a moment.)

BERTHA

Something sexual.

(Hitting her own forehead and falling on the floor.)

Like being hit in the head with a big stone or a blunt instrument.

(As her whole body shakes.)

Or being burnt with a high voltage electric charge which is powerful like electricity but it doesn't hurt. Or feeling the ground sink under your feet--

(Standing.)

When she's not touched she feels a longing that weakens her. But when she's touched she burns with desire powerful like a rocket taking off the ground.

(*Lifting a leg.*)

And tearing her entrails. Either way it's strong. That's what she said to him--when she spoke.

(*Eve starts to cross left. She stops to look at them. They look at her.*)

Is that what you said?

(*Eve exits left. Oscar exits right. He re-enters.*)

OSCAR

(*Accusingly.*)

There's no one there.

(*Grabbing the newspaper from Bertha.*)

What's that you're reading!

BERTHA

(*Grabbing the newspaper back.*)

A murder!

(*They pull the newspaper back and forth during the following lines.*)

OSCAR

What murder!

BERTHA

Man kills wife! Let go!

OSCAR

Let me see!

BERTHA

What for?

OSCAR

Let me see!

BERTHA

What for?

OSCAR

Let me see.

BERTHA

What for.

OSCAR

(*Pulling harder.*)

Let me see.

BERTHA

What for.

OSCAR

Let me see.

BERTHA

Man kills wife.

(*Oscar gets the paper. She bites his arm. His face contorts. His foot hits the floor repeatedly. He reads the newspaper.*)

OSCAR

Brother kills sister! Ha ha ha.

BERTHA

(*Taking the paper.*)

Sister kills brother! She kills him! Sister kills brother! She kills him! She kills him!

OSCAR

He kills her! He kills her. He kills her. Brother kills sister!

(*Grabbing the paper.*)

You read garbage!

BERTHA

(*Grabbing the paper.*)

Give me that!

OSCAR

It makes you more stupid and hateful.

(*Grabbing the paper.*)

Give me that.

(*As he exits left.*)

At your age.

BERTHA

At your age Oscar!

OSCAR

(Offstage.)

At your age!

(Bertha goes to the down side of the table and sits. There is a shift of light. Eve crosses the corridor from left to right. She wears her hat and carries her purse.)

EVE

(Without stopping.)

I'm going now.

BERTHA

Go ahead. I hope you come back.

EVE

(Re-entering.)

Why do you say hope?

BERTHA

Why not? I can hope, can't I? Anyone can hope. Take care of your feet.

EVE

What's wrong with my feet?

BERTHA

Nothing. Can't I tell you to take care of your feet? Where are you going?

EVE

To the store.

BERTHA

What for?

EVE

Food.

BERTHA

Take money from the drawer.

EVE

(Walking down.)

What money?

BERTHA

The money in the drawer.

EVE

There's no money in the drawer.

BERTHA

Who took the money?

EVE

The money was spent.

BERTHA

Oscar!

OSCAR

(*Offstage.*)

What!

BERTHA

Who took the money!

(*Oscar does not answer.*)

Oscar, who took the money!--Someone took the money, now we're broke!

(*Short pause.*)

Did you hear that Oscar?

OSCAR

(*Offstage.*)

I heard.

BERTHA

(*To Eve.*)

So how are we going to pay?

EVE

The same as always. Credit.

BERTHA

Oscar, you have to look for work.

OSCAR

(*Offstage.*)

Who says.

BERTHA

Eve.

OSCAR

(*Offstage.*)

What does she know.

BERTHA

You have to work. There's no money in the drawer.

OSCAR

(*Offstage.*)

Oh no?

BERTHA

No. We can't live on credit.

OSCAR

(*Offstage.*)

So, if we can't we won't.

BERTHA

That doesn't help, Oscar.

(*Bertha burps. Eve sits.*)

EVE

What do you want for dinner?

BERTHA

Same as always I guess.

EVE

Turnips.

BERTHA

Yeah, turnips will do.

EVE

What else?

BERTHA

I don't know what else. Bread I guess.

EVE

How about him?

BERTHA

Oscar!

OSCAR

(*Offstage.*)

What.

BERTHA

What do you want for dinner?

OSCAR

(*Offstage.*)

Let me think.

BERTHA

Same I guess.

EVE

Sure what else. Day old bread and turnips. Not too good. Shit is what you eat.

BERTHA

That's because you cook like shit. If you cooked good it wouldn't taste like shit.

EVE

I get blamed for every thing.

BERTHA

Not everything. There's a lot more you could get blamed for.

EVE

And you? Is anything ever your fault?

BERTHA

What do you mean?

EVE

Whose fault is it that there is no money?

BERTHA

Not mine.

EVE

Whose fault is it?

BERTHA

Oscar.

EVE

When is Oscar getting work?

BERTHA

Oscar?

EVE

Someone has to work.

BERTHA

(*Calling out to Oscar.*)

Oscar!

OSCAR

(*Offstage.*)

What!

BERTHA

Eve says you have to get out and work.

OSCAR

(*Offstage.*)

She says what!

BERTHA

She says you have to get a job. Oscar, did you hear that!

(*Silence.*)

Good! Luck!

EVE

A job that pays.

BERTHA

You hear that, Oscar. A job that pays.

(*Eve starts to go.*)

EVE

Good! Luck!

BERTHA

Sure.

EVE

Bring some money in.

BERTHA

Sure.

EVE

(*As she exits.*)

I'll get some garlic. You can put garlic on the bread.

BERTHA

What for.

EVE

(*Offstage.*)

For taste.

BERTHA

(*Disdainfully.*)

Peelease...

(*There is a shift of light.*)

BERTHA

Eve, what happened?

(*Eve stares front and doesn't answer.*)

What happened!

(*Oscar enters. He goes to Eve.*)

OSCAR

What happened? Did you get the garlic. Did they take it from you?

(*Oscar exits. Eve walks to the living room and sits. Bertha follows Eve. She is in a state of romantic despair.*)

BERTHA

Eve, people can have children even when they haven't been married. If a person does certain things with another--a child may be conceived. If they do certain things...the things that persons do when they marry.

(*Bertha goes on her knee.*)

You know what I mean, Eve. If people do those things they can have babies even if they are not married. Did you know that? Eve, don't you know that persons do certain things when they marry?

EVE

Yes.

BERTHA

What, Eve? What do they do?

(Pause.)

Eve.

(Pause.)

We can do those things! Eve!

EVE

What!

BERTHA

I asked you a question.

(Pause. Pleading.)

We can do those things. The things that people do.

EVE

(Annoyed.)

What!

(Bertha sits on the left stuffed chair.)

BERTHA

Have you ever?

(Suspiciously.)

I know you have--Who did you do it with!--Don't tell me you haven't.

(Pause.)

Did you do it with him?

(Pause.)

I wish I'd never met you.

(Eve starts to stand.)

I wish I'd never met you!

(As she speaks the following lines, Bertha straddles the arm of the chair and moves her pelvis against it.)

I wish I'd never met you!

(Eve exits right.)

I wish I'd never met you!

(Oscar enters.)

BERTHA

(Still moving her pelvis against the arm of the chair.)

This is private! Get out! This is between Eve and me!

(Oscar looks around the room. Bertha falls off the chair. Pike and Eve are heard speaking offstage.)

Who's that?

(Oscar starts taking off his jacket.)

Who's that?

(Pause.)

Who's that?

(To Oscar.)

Listen to that. Why are you taking off your jacket?

OSCAR

To show you my tit.

(Lifting his shirt. There is a lipstick mark on his breast.)

Lipstick marks. I have lipstick on my tit.

BERTHA

How did it get there?

OSCAR

...Eve.

(She looks closely at his chest.)

BERTHA

Those are dog lips. You put lipstick on a dog, then put his snout to your tit so it would leave an imprint. I know you. What dog did it? What dog? What dog?

OSCAR

Eve! Eve! Eve did it!

(He becomes saddened.)

She's with child.--My child.--I'm the father.

BERTHA

You're crazy!

OSCAR

She's pregnant with my child.

BERTHA

Well, that's not so.

OSCAR

It is.

BERTHA

I put it in her.

OSCAR

Put what?

BERTHA

The baby!

OSCAR

Don't be ridiculous. I put it in her.

(*Hitting his fist against the palm of his hand.*)

Fireworks! That's how it was! Passion! Out of my ears--and hers too.

BERTHA

(*Suspiciously.*)

What was out of her ears.

OSCAR

The cum.

BERTHA

The baby's not yours.

OSCAR

Oh no?

BERTHA

No.

OSCAR

You think it's yours?

BERTHA

I wouldn't say it wasn't.

OSCAR

You'd say it was.

BERTHA

I'd say that.

OSCAR

In your head!

BERTHA

(Proudly.)

Well...

(Eve enters.)

OSCAR & BERTHA

Whose is it!

EVE

What?

OSCAR

Out with it!

EVE

There's someone at the door.--I've had it!

OSCAR

Who!

EVE

A man.

OSCAR

What man?

EVE

The man from the bank.

OSCAR

What bank?

EVE

He has a briefcase.

OSCAR

Tell him I'm not in.

(Eve exits right. Pike and Eve are heard speaking offstage. Oscar goes to the entrance way.)

What does he want?

(Pause.)

Move aside.

(*Eve crosses left.*)

What does he want?

(*Oscar exits right. Bertha sits on the down right side of the table. Oscar speaks offstage.*)

OSCAR

What do you want! What are you staring at!

(*There is the sound of the door slamming. Oscar enters.*)

Got rid of him! You thought I couldn't handle him? One two three. That's how it is and there is nothing you can do about it. Who was that! Who was that at the door!

(*To Bertha.*)

You have to stop acting like that. Jealous of me!

(*Oscar goes to his bedroom.*)

BERTHA

Jealous!

OSCAR

Of me!

(*He lies down.*)

Because I can do things. Get right down and do them.

(*Eve enters. She goes to Bertha and whispers in her ear. Bertha goes to center. Eve follows. Bertha whispers in Eve's ear. Eve whispers in Bertha's ear.*)

BERTHA

(*Suspiciously.*)

You say you know him.

EVE

I met him.

BERTHA

And you ate his pecker!

EVE

I did not.

BERTHA

Go on.

EVE

He said he wanted to meet you.

BERTHA

What for?

EVE

He didn't say.

BERTHA

Where is he now?

EVE

Downstairs. He said he would stand on the corner. He said if you wanted to see him you could look out the window and see him standing on the corner.

BERTHA

Did he say for what?

EVE

He didn't.

BERTHA

Is he from the bank?

EVE

Yes.

BERTHA

Did he have a bulge in his pocket? A sack, a bump on the side or on his back or on his chest, to the side, a big lump, a lot of money?

EVE

I didn't notice.

BERTHA

You didn't notice? You lapped his pecker and you say you didn't notice.

EVE

I didn't lap his pecker!

BERTHA

Where is he?

(*They walk to the downstage edge and look down.*)

EVE

That's him! That one! With the hat, the brown hat. See--he's smiling. Wave.

(*Bertha looks at Eve.*)

Wave!

(*Bertha does.*)

Wave again.

(*Bertha does.*)

BERTHA

Tell him to come up. Who is he? If he likes me,--leave. He may like me.

EVE

Where should I go?

BERTHA

Go to Oscar's room.

EVE

Oscar's room?

BERTHA

Yes, go to his room.--Is he coming?

(*Eve looks.*)

EVE

Yes.

BERTHA

Go lock yourself in Oscar's room. Don't come out till I tell you. I don't care what you do with him. Go. Don't come out till I say so.

(*There is a shift of light. Eve exits right. Oscar is still lying on his bed.*)

OSCAR

I wanted to get married and I never did!

BERTHA

(*Sitting on the downstage side of the table.*)

That wasn't my fault.

OSCAR

Yes it was.

BERTHA

How was it my fault?

OSCAR

You chased all my girlfriends away.

BERTHA

You never had any.

OSCAR

I had girlfriends. Many girlfriends. Cute, pretty. Lips like strawberries when you cut strawberries and the flesh is fresh and smooth and it sweats drops of juice.--That's what they were like, fresh like juice. Their bodies were like the hind legs of a dog, tight and warm and quivering. Did you ever put your hands on the inside of the thigh of one of my girlfriends.

BERTHA

Yes, I did!

OSCAR

Hm.

BERTHA

In my mind, same as you!

OSCAR

I did it for real.

BERTHA

Only once.

OSCAR

Once is enough. You never did it.

BERTHA

I did so. More than once.

OSCAR

With Babette!

BERTHA

Sure.

OSCAR

You call that doing it. You never did it!

BERTHA

Well, it was something.

OSCAR

Not enough!

BERTHA

I did it with someone else.

OSCAR

Who?

BERTHA

Pike.

OSCAR

Pike?

(*Pause.*)

Who's that?

BERTHA

He delivered the money.

OSCAR

What money.

BERTHA

For the house.

OSCAR

From the bank.

BERTHA

Yes. He had a bulge. I thought it was the money. I touched it and it wasn't.

OSCAR

What was it?

(*Pause.*)

You say that because of mother.

BERTHA

What about mother?

OSCAR

(*Sitting on the wheelchair.*)

I slept with her!

BERTHA

Ah buzz off.

OSCAR

(Going to the living room.)

I slept with her. In the same bed!

BERTHA

So what!

OSCAR

She nursed me!

BERTHA

So what!

OSCAR

She was my woman. I owned her. I was her baby love--she never nursed you.

BERTHA

She didn't?

OSCAR

Did you ever put your lips to her breast?

BERTHA

No.

OSCAR

I did. I drank the milk that was intended for you. I have your milk inside me. You never went near her. I lay in bed with her as she fed me. And we climaxed. Both of us. My baby penis was erect like a torpedo and I climaxed and so did she.

BERTHA

Ah buzz off!

OSCAR

You think she enjoyed herself with Daddy? Ha! His cock was big but dull. My little penis was cheerful. She came so deeply and so beautifully. And me. I turned to her and when my little penis touched her belly I came. She put her hand on my fat little butt and felt it pulsate with the throes of orgasm. She held me and she climaxed. We never kissed. Our love was pure.

BERTHA

(Looking around nervously for an imaginary dog.)

Here! Doggy, doggy, doggy! I never heard that

(Going to the corridor.)

Here! Doggy, doggy, doggy.

(Walking left and right on the corridor.)

Here! Doggy, doggy, doggy.

OSCAR

Who are you calling?

BERTHA

I'm calling the dog.

(Walking to the living room.)

You'll have to leave. There is no room here for you.

OSCAR

Who says.

BERTHA

I say. This house is mine.

OSCAR

It's mine!

BERTHA

You're not wanted here.

OSCAR

Who doesn't want me.

BERTHA

A great many people don't want you.

(Eve enters.)

OSCAR

Eve...

(Eve turns to look at him. He is speechless. He throws himself at her feet. He kisses her feet. Bertha goes to her bedroom and sits on her bed.)

...Eve...Eve...

(He grabs Eve's wrists and makes her go down on the floor.)

EVE

Let go off me.

OSCAR

Shhh!

(In a whisper.)

Did you ever ask for advice?

EVE

Why?

OSCAR

Did you ever!

EVE

Maybe I did.

OSCAR

You think you may have?

EVE

Yes, maybe.

OSCAR

You look like a person who would be sinking in quicksand, drowning in a well, sliding off a cliff and never say, "Help me- what should I do?"

EVE

Why?

OSCAR

Would you ask for advice?

EVE

I would if I thought someone cared.

OSCAR

I care. Ask me for advice.

EVE

About what.

OSCAR

About a problem you have.

EVE

What problem.

OSCAR

How to get rid of someone.

EVE

Who.

OSCAR

Bertha!--Maybe you want to ask for advice about how to kill her.

EVE

Kill Bertha?

OSCAR

Yes, kill her.

(Eve walks to the doorway to Bertha's bedroom.)

EVE

Oscar wants me to get rid of you.

BERTHA

Oh yes?

EVE

He said you were a problem in my life. He said I could poison you or strangle you. He said he would help.

BERTHA

Did he say you could drown me in the tub?

EVE

Yes.

BERTHA

(Suspiciously.)

And why didn't you mention that?

EVE

He said you could fight me and overpower me, and pull me in the tub with you which is what you always wanted.

(Bertha writes on a piece of paper and gives it to Eve.)

BERTHA

Give him this.

(Eve goes to the living room.)

EVE

(Giving Oscar the piece of paper.)

Bertha sends you this.

(He takes the paper and tears it in shreds.)

OSCAR

Come here.

EVE

Where?

OSCAR

Close to me.--

(*She picks up the pieces of paper and reads from them.*)

EVE

"I would gladly see the liquid of your eyeballs drip down your face. I would gladly see a hole in your belly and see your innards fall out. I would gladly see poles go in your rectum. I would gladly see piss thrown on your face. I would gladly see your face destroyed. I would gladly see a foot step into your lower half and slush in it. You kill me and all that will happen to you." That's what she wrote.

OSCAR

(*Downcast.*)

She wrote that?

(*He goes on the floor and sobs. Eve exits left. Oscar babbles. Bertha enters.*)

BERTHA

Who are you talking to?

OSCAR

I was talking to myself.

BERTHA

What about?

OSCAR

Nothing.

(*He blows his nose.*)

BERTHA

You were talking to yourself?

OSCAR

(*Going to his room.*)

So what.

(*Oscar lies in bed. Bertha goes to Oscar's room.*)

BERTHA

Why are you crying?

OSCAR

I'm in pain.

BERTHA

Why?

OSCAR

Men too have to cry.

BERTHA

What for?

OSCAR

Do you see how it's raining out? Drizzling. Do you see how gray the sky is? Do you see the birds taking shelter under the branches of the trees? That's how I feel.

BERTHA

You?

OSCAR

Yes, me!

BERTHA

Such a delicate sentiment.

OSCAR

So? Why can't I have a delicate sentiment! I'm human! Can't I think of suicide?

BERTHA

Oh, you always do.

OSCAR

I have reasons to say it!

BERTHA

Do it! Kill yourself! Why don't you!

(*He puts his hand inside his jacket. She grabs his hand.*)

What are you doing? What do you have there?

(*She tries to feel an object in his pocket. They struggle.*)

OSCAR

Let go of my hand!

(*They struggle.*)

BERTHA

What are you trying to do?

OSCAR

I thought I may find something to eat.

BERTHA

(*Letting go of him.*)

In your pocket!

(*Pause.*)

...Something to eat in your pocket... What about the shutters? Should I close them?

OSCAR

Close them.

BERTHA

Are you hungry?

OSCAR

Hungry enough to eat if I'm fed.

BERTHA

Didn't Eve feed you?

OSCAR

I don't know.

BERTHA

You should know if she fed you.

OSCAR

I should, but I don't. I don't eat what she feeds me.

BERTHA

Why not.

OSCAR

She puts poison in my food.

BERTHA

(*She opens the drawer on the side table.*)

Here's food. I'll warm it up for you.

OSCAR

Why? To eat warm poison?

BERTHA

Eve doesn't put poison in your food.

OSCAR

There's poison in it.

BERTHA

Should I get you something else?

OSCAR

Everything else is poisoned.

BERTHA

Well then, I'm poisoned.

OSCAR

You are.

(*Lifting the front of his shirt and exposing his breast.*)

Look! Look at this. Look.

(*She looks.*)

It's your mother's tit.

(*She goes to the living room. He follows her.*)

It's your mother's tit.

BERTHA

Why is it her tit?

OSCAR

It looks like her tit.

(*She looks again.*)

Look closely.

BERTHA

Why is it hers!

OSCAR

Look at it! It's hers! It's pretty! It's pretty! Isn't it pretty! It's pretty!

BERTHA

Who says her tit was pretty.

OSCAR

I say.

BERTHA

Oh, what do you know.

OSCAR

(Covering his chest.)

I saw it. You don't know and you'll never know. Mother's tit was pretty and mine looks just like hers. It was pretty. And I saw it.

BERTHA

When?

OSCAR

When! You want to know when! In the lake.

BERTHA

You never saw it.

OSCAR

Yes I did! She was swimming in the lake! And her tit floated in the lake! I saw her naked in the lake! More man once! Naked! Nothing on!

BERTHA

Oh, buzz off!

(*Eve enters.*)

OSCAR

(*To Bertha in a low voice.*)

Don't say anything in front of her! Don't tell her what I said. She's not one of us.--Not one of the family.

EVE

There's someone at the door.

BERTHA

You and your lies.

EVE

What lies?

OSCAR

(*In a low voice.*)

Don't tell her what I said. Shh. Don't tell her.

(*Eve exits right.*)

BERTHA

I won't!

(*Pike enters. Bertha walks to him. They walk down together. Bertha walks to the living room, takes the album, and sits on the left stuffed chair. Pike stands next to Oscar. Oscar sobs. Pike picks Oscar up, carries him to the right stuffed chair, sits down cradling Oscar, hums Brahms' "Lullaby." Oscar falls asleep. Pike stops humming.*)

BERTHA

You hear the canary?

PIKE

You never told me you had a canary.

BERTHA

I have a canary and I also have a gerbil. Would you like to see the pictures now?

(*He nods. She sits on the arm of Pike's chair and opens the album. She points to a picture.*)

This is my dog.

PIKE

A dog.

BERTHA

He died. And this is me.

PIKE

And this?

BERTHA

That's him.

PIKE

Who?

BERTHA

Oscar! I wish he were dead.

(*Pointing.*)

This is my mother.

(*She squints and moves the album close to her face.*)

PIKE

What.

(*She looks at another picture.*)

BERTHA

I'm looking.

(*Bertha's head moves slowly up. Pike's head moves to the picture and back.*)

PIKE

What.

(She pushes Oscar off Pike's lap.)

BERTHA

Her tit is different! You don't have her tit, Oscar!--

(Oscar sits back on Pike's lap. Bertha pushes him off. They hit each other with newspapers. He retreats up the hallway and exits left. She returns to the chair; sits on the arm, picks up the album, and looks closely at the picture.)

BERTHA

He doesn't.

(She turns the page. She looks very closely at one of the pictures.)

PIKE

Who's that?

BERTHA

That's my Dad.

(She looks at the picture again. Stephen Heller's "Tarantella in E minor op 53" is heard. Oscar enters. He wears a long dress over his clothes and a veil and tiara on his head. He dances around the table in an expressionistic dance of nightmarish horror. Neither Pike nor Bertha look at him. At the end, Oscar collapses on the floor. He is out of breath and sobbing. Bertha and Pike start to exit right, arm in arm. As they pass, Oscar grabs Pike's leg. Pike drags Oscar as he walks. As they pass Oscar's bedroom, Oscar crawls into it. Eve enters. Oscar grabs her by the ankle and pulls her in. Pike and Bertha are heard offstage.)

OSCAR

Now's the time.

EVE

For what?

OSCAR

To kill her.

BERTHA

(Offstage.)

Oscar, if you don't get work you're out and I'll get Pike here to take you to a home for the mentally inept. Isn't that so, Pike?

(Pike mumbles. There is the sound of the door closing. Oscar starts to have a heart attack. Eve helps him to the dining room table. He takes the newspaper from the drawer and looks for the want-ads.)

OSCAR

Handy person. Must be well organized, clean, personable.-God!

(He looks at another ad')

Grocery. Seeking long-term employees for stocking shelves and deliveries. High school graduate. Oh god!

(He looks at another ad')

Bookkeeper. For nursing home. Ugh. Must be kind to the elderly. Ugh.

(He looks elsewhere in the newspaper.)

Beautician. Haircuts and permanents. Also manicures. Must be talented.

(He grabs Eve.)

Eve, is there a job for me? Is there a place in the world for me? Can you get me a job? Help me.

(Bertha enters. She goes to the down side of the table. Eve puts on Oscar's jacket and goes to the hallway.)

EVE

I'm going to look for work.

BERTHA

You look just like him.

EVE

I'm wearing his jacket.

BERTHA

Well, you look ridiculous.

EVE

(Starting to go.)

I'm getting a job.

BERTHA

(Goes to the entrance way.)

Take off that jacket!

(Eve throws the jacket in Bertha's face. Bertha is knocked down on the floor.)

EVE

(Offstage.)

I'll find work for him.

(There is a shift of light. Bertha stands. Eve re-enters. She has dark circles around her eyes.)

BERTHA

Don't tell me you got a job?

EVE

I did.

BERTHA

I'm going to have to ask you for money.

EVE

What for?

BERTHA

You live here so I'm going to ask you for money.

EVE

It's hell out there.

BERTHA

Worse than here?

EVE

Worse. Where's Oscar?

BERTHA

In bed. Reading comics.

(*Eve starts to go to Oscar's bedroom.*)

Where are you going?

EVE

To see him.

BERTHA

Why him? Always him!

EVE

Yes him!

BERTHA

I missed you!

(*Eve goes into Oscar's bedroom. Oscar is reading a comic book.*)

Don't go in there! He's a mess!

OSCAR

How did it go?

EVE

Fine.

OSCAR

You don't look well.

EVE

I don't feel well.

OSCAR

Lie down, Eve.

(*Eve lies down next to Oscar.*)

Eve... You feel warm.

(*Eve gasps. Oscar puts his arm around her.*)

Are you sick, Eve?

EVE

I don't feel well.

OSCAR

I hope nothing happens to you.

(*There is a shift of light. Oscar goes to the dining room.*)

OSCAR

Eve's sick.

BERTHA

Now Eve's sick.

OSCAR

She needs money. Take money from the box and give it to her.

BERTHA

What box? There's no money in the box.

OSCAR

Take some money from my sock then.

(*He throws a sock on the table.*)

BERTHA

(*Taking the sock.*)

You keep money in a sock?

OSCAR

Eve gave it to me.

BERTHA

Where is she?

OSCAR

She may be in the hospital and she may be in her room.--Last night she said she was going to the hospital.

BERTHA

(*Taking money from the sock.*)

How much should I give her?

OSCAR

How much is there?

BERTHA

Three fifty. Three fifty is not enough. I'm not going to give her three fifty.

OSCAR

Why not?

BERTHA

Three fifty?

OSCAR

Why not?

BERTHA

That's not enough.

OSCAR

For what?

BERTHA

Were you thinking you were going to pay for the hospital? --with that?

OSCAR

I thought it'd help.

BERTHA

To pay for what?

OSCAR

Maybe to buy food while she was there.

BERTHA

How long is she going to be there?

OSCAR

Three days.

BERTHA

Why do you think that?

OSCAR

That's a long time.

BERTHA

Maybe she'll be in the hospital three years.

(*Pause.*)

You're silent? Well, that may happen. Some people are in the hospital for years.--What was wrong with her?

OSCAR

She had a pain.

BERTHA

Where?

(*He points to his abdomen.*)

OSCAR

She worked too hard.--For you!

(*Oscar and Bertha go to Oscar's bedroom. Eve is lying on his bed. Bertha stands against the back wall. Oscar sits on his wheelchair at the foot of the bed.*)

OSCAR

(*To Eve.*)

What were you going to say?

(*Oscar's arm begins to move towards Eve.*)

What did you say?

(*He leans towards her.*)

What?

(*Bertha grabs Oscar by the collar and pulls him out of the chair: She pushes him against the wall by the collar.*)

BERTHA

You were always closer to her. You just did. You got closer to her because you just did. She didn't ask you to. She never said you could. You just got closer to her. You never wondered if you could.

(*Pushing him under the bed.*)

You never wondered if she wanted you to. You just did. I never thought she wanted me. You never questioned it. It never occurred to you to question it. You wanted to be near her and you were.

(*She puts her cheek next to Eve's. She whispers.*)

...Eve...

(*Eve's body vibrates.*)

OSCAR

(Pushing Bertha off the bed.)

Get off her!

(He crawls in bed.)

BERTHA

Oh, buzz off!

OSCAR

You buzz off!

(There is a shift of light. Pike enters and sits on the down side of the table. Bertha sits on the right of the table. Eve sits on the left. She wears a sheet around her shoulders. Oscar sits up center. They play euchre. Bertha shuffles the cards and deals three to each, then two to each. She places the cards center, then takes the top card and places it to the left. They play one round. Oscar looks at Eve adoringly. Pike mumbles.)

BERTHA

You haven't had her yet. Have you?

OSCAR

Many times.

BERTHA

In your mind.

OSCAR

It doesn't matter where.

BERTHA

That is just not the way you do it.

OSCAR

Don't tell me how to do it.

(They play.)

PIKE

How's work?

OSCAR

It's not bad.

BERTHA

They haven't paid him yet.

OSCAR

I'm an apprentice.

BERTHA

Eve got paid.

OSCAR

She knew how to do it.

BERTHA

Why don't you learn.

OSCAR

I'm just getting the knack of it.

PIKE

That's good Oscar.

OSCAR

(*Playing.*)

...yes...

EVE

...It takes time.

(*The lights begin to fade.*)

OSCAR

...Yes. It takes time. It's not all that easy.

END